

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00

ACDA-05 SAM-01 SCCT-01 OPR-02 SY-05 PM-03 H-02 INR-07

L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 SAB-01

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P R 221500Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4459

DIA WASHDC PRIORITY

CIA WASHDC PRIORITY

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT BAGHDAD UNN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 6591

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS LE PLO

SUBJECT: SECURITY SITUATION IN BEIRUT -- MAY 22

REF: BEIRUT 6497

1. BEIRUT TENSE AS SNIPING CONTINUES THIS AFTERNOON IN
DEKWANEH/TEL ZAATAR AREA. CEASEFIRE ARRANGED THROUGH LOCAL
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MEDIATORS, AMONG WHOM WE UNDERSTAND WERE SAEB SALAM, RAYMOND

EDDE, AND IMAM MUSA SADR, FOR MIDNIGHT MAY 21-22 DID NOT RPT NOT HOLD, AND NIGHT AND EARLY MORNING HOURS SAW HEAVY FIRING IN THAT PART OF CITY. LEBANESE ARMY SOURCE CONFIRMED THAT PALESTINIAN ELEMENTS IN TEL ZAATAR HAVE BEEN EMPLOYING 82 MM AND 120 MM MORTARS; 20 MM AA GUNDS FIRED HORIZONTALLY; AND 122 RPT 122 MM ROCKETS (SOVIET) ON MULTIPLE LAUNCHERS. MORNING MAY 22, FIRING SPREAD BRIEFLY AND SPORADICALLY TO SHIAH QUARTER, AND FROM TIME TO TIME SNIPING IN DEKWANEH AREA HAS APPEARED MOVE TOWARD NEAR-BY SINN AL FIL.

2. AT PRESENT, ROADS INTO BEIRUT, WITH EXCEPTION OF THAT SKIRTING TEL ZAATAR CAMP (BEIT MERI ROAD) ARE OPEN. EMBOFF JUST RETURNED FROM AIRPORT REPORTS OPERATIONS NORMAL THERE.

3. MOST STORES AND BUSINESS ESTABLISHMENTS ARE CLOSED, BUT IT IMPOSSIBLE TO DETERMINE WHETHER THIS IN SUPPORT OF GENERAL STRIKE PROCLAIMED BY MERCHANTS ASSOCIATION TO PROTEST STATE OF INSECURITY OR GENERAL STRIKE CALLED BY "NATIONALIST AND PROGRESSIVE FORCES" (I.E., LEFTISTS) TO COMMEMORATE FORTIETH DAY AFTER APRIL 13 AIN RUMANNEH "MASSACRE." LEFTISTS AND SOME PALESTINIANS, INCLUDING ARMED ELEMENTS, WERE PLANNING MASS DEMONSTRATION AND MARCH THIS AFTERNOON, BUT WE UNDERSTAND KAMAL JUMBLATT AND HIS ALLIES HAVE CALLED OFF THIS EVENT. SYMPTOMATIC OF GENERALLY TENSE SECURITY SITUATION WAS SHOOT-OUT THIS MORNING BASTA (MOSLEM) QUARTER INVOLVING SUPPORTERS OF OUTGOING PRIMIN RASHID SOLH AND SAEB SALAM. FORMER REPORTEDLY FIRED ON TWO SHOPS OPENING FOR BUSINESS, KILLING ONE PERSON AND WOUNDING FOUR. DEAD MAN WAS FOLLOWER OF SALAM. ARMY SOURCE PLACES LEBANESE-PALESTINIAN CASUALTIES IN PERIOD 0100 TO 0600 LOCAL MAY 22 AT TOTAL 10 KILLED, 52 WOUNDED IN VICINITY TEL ZAATAR CAMP.

4. COMMENT: FIRING CONTINUES TO SPUTTER ALONG BUT THUS FAR HAS NEITHER BEEN CONTAINED BY EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE CEASEFIRE NOR SPREAD SIGNIFICANTLY. EFFORTS BY EDDE, SALAM, AND PRESUMABLY OTHERS (INCLUDING GOL OFFICIALS AND PLO LEADERSHIP) TO RESTORE CALM ARE CONTINUING, ALTHOUGH WE UNDERSTAND THAT IMAM SADR HAS APPARENTLY SUSPENDED HIS MEDIATION EFFORTS IN DESPAIR. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE AT PRESENT THAT MAJOR FEDAYEEN GROUPS, SUCH AS FATAH, AS'IQA, ETC., HAVE BECOME INVOLVED. WE HAVE HEARD FROM NUMBER OF SOURCES THAT LOCAL SUPPORTERS AND HIRELINGS OF IRAQ AND CONFIDENTIAL

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LIBYA ARE AGAIN TRYING TO FAN FLAMES, PERHAPS IN EFFORT TO DRAW ARMY AND ADDITIONAL PLO ELEMENTS INTO FRAY. AT PRESENT, WE MILDLY HOPEFUL THAT HOTHEADS AND AGENTS PROVOCATEURS WILL NOT RPT NOT SUCCEED IN PROVOKING CONTENDING PARTIES INTO LARGER, MORE WIDE-SPREAD HOSTILITIES, BUT WE NONETHELESS CONCERNED (AS ARE SENIOR GOL OFFICIALS) THAT PROLONGATION OF CURRENT SITUATION CARRIES DEFINITE RISK OF THIS HAPPENING. TONIGH MAY DETERMINE WHETHER CEASEFIRE GAINS MORE EFFECTIVE OBSERVANCE OR SITUATION DEVELOPS

ALONG MORE UGLY LINES.

GODLEY

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